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AUTHOR Carl, David L.
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ABSTRACT

Project Mobilization was a program designed to discover relevant materials and procedures for stimulating interest and motivation in educationally disadvantaged suburban youth. In the Union County Regional High School District No. 1, New Jersey, 15 percent of students were found to be "educationally disadvantaged." Preliminary steps in the mobilization program were inservice teacher training and curriculum writing projects in the summers of 1967, 1968, and 1969. The program was instituted for grade 9 in 1967, for grade 10 in 1968, and for the junior level in 1969. For all three of the grade levels, a social studies and English curriculum was developed utilizing the multi media approach--games, puzzles, poll taking, and participating in community activities. The summer projects were followed by monthly inservice sessions, which were held to be so successful that a project for grade 12 is to be held in the summer of 1970. The dropout rate since the project began fell to under 1 percent, and students averaged a 1.2 grade level increase in reading. The greatest strengths of the program are considered to have been the preparation of teachers to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged and the construction of relevant topics to promote motivation, while reinforcing and introducing needed skills for achievement in high school. (RJ)

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Project Mobilization

A Program for the Educationally Disadvantaged in a Suburban Community

DAVID L. CARL[1]

The needs of the educationally disadvantaged in a middle class suburban community are often overlooked. Stress is placed upon academic subjects which attempt to prepare the student for the college of his choice. The educationally disadvantaged youth is frequently given a dilute form of the academic program or selected materials have little relevance for or do not meet the needs of these students. The result is lack of interest and motivation which many times leads to school dropouts.

The teachers of the Union County Regional High School District No. 1 which is a four year regional high school serving the educational needs of students from Berkeley Heights, Clark, Garwood, Kenilworth, Mountainside, and Springfield, New Jersey, realized something must be done to discover relevant materials and procedures for dealing with these students.

The first steps in this mobilization program were in-service teacher training and curriculum writing projects in the summers of 1967, 1968 and 1969. Teachers of the educationally disadvantaged at the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade levels, a reading specialist, and a learning disabilities specialist weer invited to become a part of project planning teams to be funded by Title I grants. Project members discussed and explored available records to find the general characteristics and deficiencies of the educationally disadvantaged in the District. They found that about 15% of the student body could be classified as educationally disadvantaged the charateristics most frequently mentioned of these students were: three or more years below grade level in reading; language arts skills below expectations; a negative self image; a short attention span and the lack of ability to grasp abstract ideas or symbols. The teachers realized that they had undertaken a challenging job and must attempt to motivate the apathetic and alienated individual while at the same time try to aid in the development of better attitudes and skills necessary for school achievement. The first step was to seek the advice of experts in the field of curricular development. Consultants from New York University and Columbia University became a part of the program. Additional preparation included the reading specialist instructing the teachers on how to determine readability of material, visitations to Upward Bound programs at Montclair State, Princeton, and Seton Hall University and attendance at the Fordham University Film Festival.

The project members then felt they were prepared to start writing a curriculum for use with the educationally disadvantaged groups the result was a flexible, relevant curriculum which moved from concrete to abstract involvement. Throughout the units, the idea of skill development was characterized by the posing of sequentially progressive, small easy-to-master tasks providing each student with a greater opportunity for immediate positive reinforcement and consequently an enhanced feeling of success.

The program was instituted for the

1 Mr. Carl is Title I Coordinator, Union County Regional High School District No. 1.

9th grade in September of 1967, the tenth grade in September of 1968 and the junior level in September of 1969. Students were selected for the program by guidance personnel and teachers involved in the in-service sessions. Teacher recommendations, interviews and standardized testing were used as criteria in selecting students for the experimental projects.

The Social Studies and English curriculum attempts to promote involvement by stressing problems, issues, and decisions which the student faces. The multi media approach uses games, puzzles, role playing creative arts and dramatic projects, poll taking and participation in community activities. Each lesson is directed to individualized, class or group work. Reading and problem solving activities have been adjusted to reading and grade level ability.

Each area of study includes a teacher's guide stating skill and instructional objectives to be realized with daily and long term lessons. The guide also lists suggested questions and activities, films, filmstrips, records and tapes to be used with a particular area of study. A teacher and a student grade level bibliography is included for each theme developed.

Topics for ninth grade include: Man and Society; Prejudice and Discrimination: Man and Religion. The unit Man and Society in social studies selects contemporary and historical persons such as John F. Kennedy, Clarence Darrow, Claude Brown, Jim Piersall, Leonard Bernstein and Adolph Hitler to emphasize that man displays similar as well as different characteristics and qualities because of different past and present experiences. In English, myths which depict the characteristics of courage, individuality, creativity and destruction are used to show that man has explained himself and his environment within the framework of his own experiences. The feature length films, *Fear Strikes Out, On the Waterfront* and *High Noon* are used as reinforcement and motivational devices to create an interest in the topic. The social studies unit, Prejudice and Discrimination explores the nature of prejudice and its affect upon selected groups such as the Jew, Puerto Rican, American Indian and the Negro. Varying views of Civil Rights represented by the N.A.A.C.P., C.O.R.E., The Black Muslims, the National Urban League and anti Negro movements are discussed. Contributions of minority groups to our American heritage are also explored. The English curricular units reinforce the impact of prejudice and discrimination by making use of selected works such as *Diary of Anne Frank* and *West Side Story*. The works of James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps aer used as examples to show the affects of discrimination as well as the literary contributions of American Negroes. The feature length film, *A Raisin in the Sun,* is used to introduce this area of study.

At present, three units in social studies—Protest, Impact of Mass Media, and You and the Law—have been completed for use with sophomore groups. The Protest unit attempts to evaluate methods of, reasons for and results of protest in the past and present in our American society. The Impact of Mass Media study gives a brief history of the mass media and its effect on our thinking and purchasing power. The entire unit is based on an audio-visual approach to dealing with the educationally disadvantaged student. The unit, You and the Law, stresses the importance of being familiar with both federal and local government. Topics of interest to teen-

agers such as arrest and trial, shoplifting and liability are centers of discussion. Role playing situations of actual court cases are used. A class trip to a court in session is part of the activity phase of the unit.

In English, three units of study have been developed at the 10th grade level. The first theme, Man's Development in His Society, contains selected novels, short stories, dramas, poems, essays, motion pictures, slides and filmstrips to show that man faces the realities of fear, love, hate and competition in his striving for goals and achievement. The second theme, Man's Involvement in His Society, attempts to make the student aware of how he becomes involved in his society. Problems and rewards of involvement are emphasized. Literary selections deal with the teenager's involvement in school activities, peer group relationship and larger segments of society. Man's Communication in his Society, the third theme, exposes the student to everything from opera to slang, from *Moldau* to the Scopes *"Monkey Trial."* The chief concern of this unit is that the student becomes aware of the limitations of a right-wrong outlook and that he learns to use skills of interpretation as they apply to situations and circumstances of life. The eleventh grade English program topic, Man and His Relationships is divided into three themes. The first theme, Man's Search for Understanding Himself, explores the nature of conflict, courage vs cowardice and problem solving in one's adjustment to life. The film, *Requiem for a Heavyweight* and excerpts from *Red Badge of Courage* are sample content materials. The second theme, Man's Ability to Experience Meaningful Relationship With Other People, encourages the student to relate positively to other human beings. Selections from *Our Town* and *Of Mice and Men* are used as examples to show relationships between individuals. The third theme, Man's Ability to Survive and Appreciate His Physical Environment attempts to examine man's rational and irrational reactions to various aspects and problems of nature such as the sea, exploration of space and appreciation of beauty. Superstition, witchcraft and the supernatural are also explored.

The eleventh grade social studies units include; The Working Man; Consumer Education; and War and Peace. The Working Man unit discusses the problems of the school dropout, problems of labor today, the positive and negative affects of automation and specialization on the labor force and basic principles of our economic system. The unit attempts to aid the student by presenting agencies that will aid him in getting jobs and those agencies which prevent discrimination in hiring practices. Labor management relations are used as opportunities to present roleplaying activities to the class. Field trips to local business establishments is a culminating activity of the unit.

Selected readings and exercises attempt to make the student aware of the impact of advertising on his choice of materials in the Consumer Education unit. The goal is to enable the student to evaluate critically the information presented through advertising. Problems of establishing credit, installment buying and borrowing money are also presented.

Terms related to foreign diplomacy are explained in the first part of the unit on War and Peace. The second and third parts deal with the reasons for and effect of war on the individual, the group, and society. The fourth section deals with the problems of

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THE RELATIONSHIP . . .

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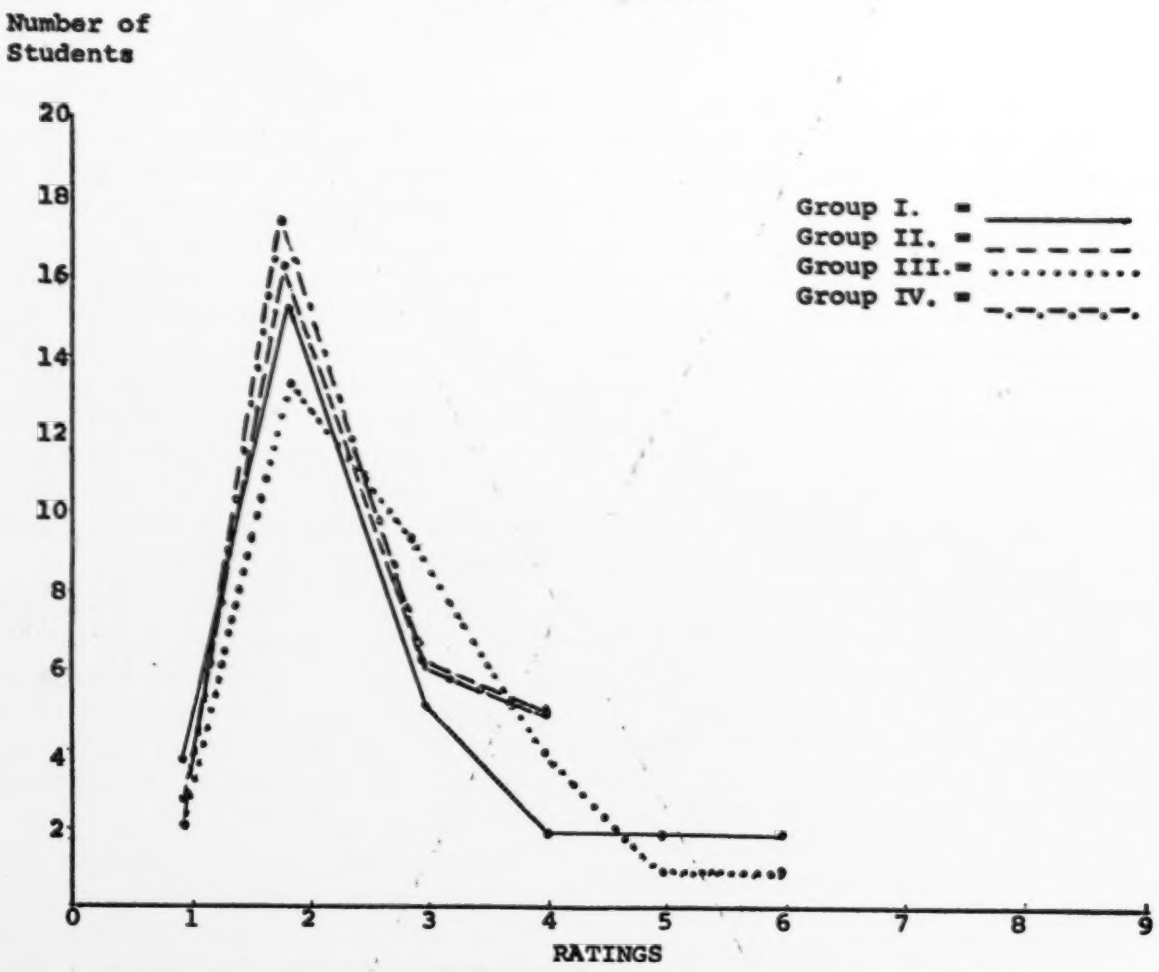
FIGURE I. A COMPARISON OF COOPERATING TEACHERS' RATINGS OF STUDENT TEACHERS



PROJECT MOBILIZATION

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war and the search for peace in the 1950's and 1960's.

The summer projects have been followed by monthly in-service sessions to evaluate and make revisions when necessary to the completed units of study. The summer projects and monthly in-service sessions have proved to be so successful that another session involving teachers of the slow learner at the 12th grade level will be held in the summer of 1970. Since the start of the project the drop-out rate has been reduced to less than one percent and the students in the program have averaged a 1.2 grade level increase in reading.

The greatest strengths of the program have been the preparation of the teachers to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged and the construction of relevant topics to promote motivation, while reinforcing and introducing needed skills for achievement in high school.

The Union County Regional High School District No. 1 rejects the idea that the secondary school is too late to aid the educationally disadvantaged.